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Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Modalities, format and organization of the high-level plenary meeting of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction and background

1. Five years ago, the leaders of the world came together to adopt the United Nations Millennium Declaration,[1] building upon a decade of major United Nations conferences and summits. That landmark document captured the aspiration of the peoples of the United Nations to build a better and safer world for the twenty-first century — a more peaceful, prosperous and just world, united by the common values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility. It set out a blueprint for achieving such a world through collective security and a global partnership for development.

2. Since the Millennium Summit, we have convened other major conferences, including one on financing for development in Monterrey, Mexico, and one on sustainable development in Johannesburg, South Africa, which added to the global consensus on a number of important issues.

3. By resolution 58/291 of 6 May 2004, the General Assembly decided to convene in New York in 2005, at the commencement of its sixtieth session, a high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly, in which heads of State and Government would participate — in other words, a summit — on dates to be decided by the Assembly at its present session.

4. The summit will be an event of decisive importance. It will comprehensively review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the integrated follow-

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up to the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. It will, however, be more than that: it will provide us with a unique opportunity to inject new energy into the pursuit of the vision embodied in the Millennium Declaration. I, as Secretary-General, will spare no effort to make this a productive meeting.

5. The General Assembly requested me to submit a comprehensive report on the Millennium Declaration. I will present that report in March 2005. It is my hope that it will assist Member States in their deliberations. The report will cover all areas of the Millennium Declaration, including a review of the progress made in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and their financing.

6. The report will also draw, in particular in the area of peace and security, on the findings of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change which I established one year ago and which will submit its report to me on 2 December 2004. I intend to transmit the report of the Panel to Member States without delay, together with some comments and suggestions concerning the discussion of the recommendations of the Panel and the decisions to be taken thereon, outlining, in particular, which of the recommendations may require follow-up in the various intergovernmental bodies in the United Nations system. My comprehensive report on the Millennium Declaration will cover the whole range of issues set out in the Declaration and will indicate where, in my view, bold decisions need to be taken by Member States at the summit in September 2005 in order to realize its objectives.

7. In resolution 58/291, the Assembly requested me to submit to it at its fifty-ninth session a report on suggested modalities, format and organization of this major event for its consideration and final decision. This present report is submitted in response to that request.

8. Bearing in mind paragraph 3 of Assembly resolution 58/291, the President of the fifty-eighth session of the Assembly carried out open-ended consultations to provide input into my report. The President requested the permanent representatives of Guatemala and Norway, as facilitators, to conduct the consultations. The facilitators held a series of consultations during May and June 2004 and submitted their report to the President on 6 July. The President subsequently forwarded the report to me.

9. The report of the facilitators was very useful indeed and I would like to thank the President of the fifty-eighth session of the Assembly and the facilitators for their valuable contribution.

10. The recommendations made in the present report are based on the report of the facilitators and on the positive experience of the Millennium Summit, held from 6 to 8 September 2000, and on the experience accumulated to date in organizing special sessions, major United Nations conferences and summits, high-level dialogues and other meetings of the General Assembly.

II. Modalities, format and organization of the high-level plenary meeting

A. Duration and timing

11. On the duration of the meeting, the facilitators indicated that a significant majority of Member States would prefer a meeting of three days. I agree, and recommend that the General Assembly consider holding the high-level plenary meeting for three days.

12. The General Assembly decided to hold the high-level plenary meeting at the commencement of its sixtieth session. Given that the sixtieth session of the Assembly will start on 13 September 2005, the Assembly may wish to consider holding the meeting from Wednesday, 14 September, to Friday, 16 September 2005.

13. The general debate, which the Assembly may wish to hold as usual, would then commence on Tuesday, 20 September.

B. Structure and format

14. The facilitators indicated that the majority of delegations preferred a combination of plenary meetings and interactive sessions, as was the case at the Millennium Summit. The Millennium Summit consisted of three days of plenary meetings, with two meetings held each day. During these three days, four round-table meetings were convened.

15. The General Assembly may wish to follow the format and structure of the Millennium Summit and hold plenary meetings and four interactive round-table meetings.

16. Regarding the themes for the round-table meetings, the Assembly may wish to consider two options. Each round-table meeting could cover the entire agenda of the summit, thus repeating the practice followed at the Millennium Summit. This would have the advantage of both allowing an integrated view and highlighting the interlinkages among the different issues under consideration.

17. The second option would be for the Assembly to allocate the discussion of specific themes to the four round-table meetings. This would allow for a more focused discussion of greater depth on specific aspects of the issues under consideration.

C. Participation

18. The General Assembly, in resolution 58/291, decided that the high-level plenary meeting should be held at the level of heads of State and Government. I strongly support that decision and encourage all Member States to participate in the summit at the highest level.

19. With regard to observer delegations, the Assembly may wish to consider following its established practice.

20. For the Millennium Summit, the Assembly decided to invite a co-chair of the Millennium Forum, the civil society event held in May 2000, and the President of the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments to address the plenary of the Summit. The Assembly may wish to follow a similar procedure at its high-level plenary meeting in 2005.

21. For security reasons and the space limitations in the United Nations building, the broader participation of civil society is unfortunately not possible. However, I believe that civil society can make a valuable contribution to the preparatory process, in terms of both substantive contributions and of creating awareness of the issues. The Assembly, therefore, may wish to consider organizing hearings with civil society organizations, prior to the high-level plenary meeting, in June 2005.

22. I had alluded to these hearings in my report in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354), in which I suggested that the General Assembly convene a two-day, informal, interactive hearing with non-governmental organizations prior to the opening of the Assembly each year. The comprehensive, five-year review of the Millennium Declaration would be an excellent opportunity to try out this suggestion.

D. Preparatory process

23. To prepare for an effective summit, the preparatory process would need to adhere to a number of general principles. First, the process must be open, inclusive and transparent. Second, it must bring together various contributions and produce a single integrated package of decisions to be presented at the high-level plenary meeting. Third, the process must be flexible and efficient, making as much use of existing meetings and mechanisms as possible. Last, but not least, given the importance and scope of the agenda, the preparatory process must be led with a view to achieving consensus and results. In view of the importance of the issues, Member States may wish to involve ministers at the appropriate time.

24. For these reasons, the President of the General Assembly, in consultation with Member States, may wish to designate a dedicated, small steering group of countries, consisting of representatives from all regions. The steering group would help the President to guide the preparatory process. It is important that the Member States nominate officials that are prepared to devote a considerable amount of time to this process.

25. It would be important to have reached decisions on the timing and duration during the main part of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. Also, it would be preferable if decisions on the structure and format of the high-level plenary were reached before I present my comprehensive report on the Millennium Declaration in March 2005. An early decision on these organizational issues would leave sufficient time for Member States and the Secretariat of the United Nations to make the necessary arrangements for the high-level plenary meeting and would allow Member States to focus on the substance of the meeting after they have received my report.

E. High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development

26. By resolution 58/230 of 23 December 2003, the General Assembly decided to hold the biennial High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development in 2005 at the ministerial level. It also decided to set the time and modalities of the High-level Dialogue at its fifty-ninth session, taking into account other major events. I see great merit in holding the Dialogue prior to the summit so that it can provide an input into the preparatory process.

27. The High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development should take place at the ministerial level, with the participation of ministers responsible for various portfolios, including finance, trade and development, and should deliver a concrete set of recommendations to the preparatory process for the summit.

28. There are several options regarding the timing of the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development. In chronological order, the first option would be to hold the High-level Dialogue in April 2005, for example, immediately after the special high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. This might increase high-level participation from ministers who will be attending the meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions in Washington, D.C., on 16 and 17 April 2005. However, if the High-level Dialogue were held in April, it might be too early for it to have a decisive impact on the preparatory process for the high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly.

29. The second option would be to hold the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development late in June or early in July 2005, immediately prior to the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2005 of the Economic and Social Council, which will be held in Geneva. This option would also enhance attendance at the ministerial level by the back-to-back timing of the two high-level meetings. It would also allow the Dialogue to provide timely and concrete input to the preparatory process for the high-level plenary meeting.

30. The third option would be to hold the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development immediately prior to the high-level plenary meeting, possibly on Monday, 12 September, and Tuesday, 13 September 2005. It may, however, be difficult to ensure high-level participation in the Dialogue, given that ministers will be travelling to attend the meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions in Washington, D.C., on 24 and 25 September 2005.

31. The scheduling of the High-level Dialogue late in June or early in July appears to be optimal for it to provide input to the preparatory process, since April would be too early and September too late. The General Assembly, therefore, may consider holding the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development in Geneva late in June or early in July 2005.

III. Conclusion

32. As I observed above, the summit meeting in September 2005 will be an event of decisive importance. The decisions to be taken at the meeting may determine the whole future of the United Nations. Even more important, they will offer us our best — perhaps our only — chance to ensure a safer, more just and more prosperous

world in the new century, not only for our own sakes but for those of our children and grandchildren. That is what I meant when I told the Assembly in 2004 that "we have come to a fork in the road". We must grasp this opportunity, and address head-on the challenges that we face.

33. Therefore, I cannot urge too strongly Member States to take an active and positive interest in the issues before the summit meeting. Indeed, I urge them to engage in the preparations for the meeting at the highest level of government, with an unshakeable determination to reach agreement on decisions that will truly fulfil the commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration, giving us a stronger and more effective United Nations as an instrument for achieving a better and safer world. Unquestionably, this is an ambitious agenda but I have no doubt that it is feasible if Member States have the will to do it. The weak, the vulnerable and the insecure citizens of this world look to the Organization for help and for protection. Let us not disappoint them.

Notes

[1] See General Assembly resolution 55/2.